

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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DRAFTED BY NEA/AFN:JKBISHOP:MAR
APPROVED BY NEA:NAVELIOTES
M/CT:AMB. ISHAM
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 013411

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, AG

SUBJECT: ALGERIA AND TERRORISM/HIJACKING

1. ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR MAOUI WAS CALLED IN JANUARY 16 FOR DISCUSSION ON TERRORISM/HIJACKING WITH DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY VELIOTES AND AMBASSADOR ISHAM. VELIOTES EXPLAINED THAT SENATE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE HEARINGS DUE TO BEGIN JANUARY 23 ON THIS TOPIC, AND SECRETARY SCHEDULED TESTIFY. DEPARTMENT EXPECTS HEARINGS, WHICH WILL LAST A WEEK, WILL DEAL IN PART ON ALGERIAS POLICY REGARDING HIJACKING, AN INTEREST STIMULATED BY ALGERIAN HANDLING OF JAL HIJACKING IN OCTOBER 1977. VELIOTES ADDED THAT PRESS OCCASIONALLY MENTIONS ALGERIA AS TRANSIT POINT FOR INTERNATIONAL TERRORISTS, E.G., CARLOS, GIVING THE IMPRESSION THAT ALGERIA IS SUPPORTING TERRORISM. NOTING THAT U.S. CONFIDENTIAL

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ALREADY HAS LEGISLATION WHICH LINKS EXIM FINANCING TO SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM, VELIOTES TOLD MAOUI HE HAD BEEN ASKED TO DEPARTMENT FOR AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON TERRORISM/HIJACKING AND TO RECEIVE DEPARTMENT'S REQUEST FOR AN ACCELERATED REPLY TO QUESTIONS RAISED IN ALGIERS BY U.S. EMBASSY ABOUT ALGERIA'S POLICY ON HIJACKING.

2. AMBASSADOR ISHAM INFORMED MAOUI 25 SENATORS HAVE CO-

SPONSORED RIBICOFF BILL WHICH WILL BE DISCUSSED IN HEARING. HE EXPRESSED INTEREST IN POSSIBLE LINKAGE BETWEEN ALGERIAN DOMESTIC LEGISLATION ON HIJACKING AND CHANCES OF ALGERIAN ADHERENCE TO MONTREAL AND HAGUE CONVENTIONS. HE EXPLAINED U.S. NOT QUESTIONING ALGERIAN DECISION TO PERMIT PLANES TO LAND BECAUSE THEY ARE IN DIFFICULTY OR FOR OTHER HUMANITARIAN REASONS, BUT IS INTERESTED IN WHAT HAPPENS TO HIJACKERS AFTERWARDS, WHETHER THEY ARE FREED TO REPEAT THEIR CRIMINAL ACTIONS ELSEWHERE.

3. IN HIS RESPONSE, MAOUI EXPLAINED ABSENCE OF BOUMEDIENE AND BOUTEFLIKA HAD PRECLUDED REPLY IN ALGIERS AND SAID HE WOULD TRY TO CONTACT THEM AFTER MEETING TO EXPEDITE RESPONSE. HE DISMISSED REPORTS THAT CARLOS HAD TRANSITED ALGERIA WITH ASSERTION THAT ALGERIA COULD NOT BE JUDGED ON BASIS OF PRESS ACCOUNTS. HE STATED GOA CONDEMNS TERRORISM, EVEN WHEN AUTHORS ARE PALESTINIANS, AND ADDED THAT PLO ITSELF HAS OPPOSED TERRORISM. ON HIJACKINGS, HE SAID THAT IN OPEC MINISTERS AND JAL INCIDENTS GOA HAD ACTED IN RESPONSE TO REQUEST OF GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED AND AVOIDED LOSS OF LIFE, ADDING THAT FOLLOWING THE HIJACKING OF AN ALGERIAN PLANE GOA HAD ENACTED LEGISLATION WHICH INCLUDED DEATH PENALTY FOR HIJACKERS WHERE THEIR ACTION RESULTED IN LOSS OF LIFE.
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4. ASKED WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HIJACKERS INVOLVED IN OPEC MINISTERS AND JAL CASES, MAOUI DENIED KNOWLEDGE. REGARDING MONTREAL CONVENTION, HE SAID ONE SECTION APPEARS INFRINGE ON NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY, AND WHILE THIS MIGHT NOT PRECLUDE EVENTUAL ALGERIAN ACCEPTANCE, IT IS A PROBLEM GIVEN ALGERIAN SENSITIVITY ON SOVEREIGNTY. MEETING CONCLUDED WITH OUTLINE BY ISHAM OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION DURING WHICH HE UNDERLINED THAT IT IS ADDRESSED INTER ALIA TO STATES PROVIDING SANCTUARY TO HIJACKERS, WHICH ALSO IS PROVISION OF EXIM LEGISLATION TO WHICH VELIOTES HAD REFERRED.

5. COMMENT: MAOUI WAS UNEQUIVOCAL IN HIS ASSERTION THAT GOA CONDEMNS TERRORISM. HE MADE NO EFFORT TO NUANCE THIS POSITION WITH REFERENCE TO LIBERATION MOVEMENTS. HE WAS EQUALLY ADAMANT IN HIS INSISTANCE THAT GOA OPPOSES HIJACKING, WHILE STATING THAT NEGOTIATION WITH HIJACKERS LESS LIKELY RESULT IN BLOODSHED THAN ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES, E.G., MOGADISCIO. CHRISTOPHER

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